

P O E

ON THE

Countess of POMFRET'S

B E N E F A C T I O N

TO THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

O X F O R D:

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see of London
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1755. for a Letter
to the University of Oxford
to the Countess of Pomfret
concerning her collection of
Manuscripts.

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see also a
poem in
D. for 1755
page 400

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ADVERTISEMENT.

It may be proper to acquaint the Reader, that the following Verses were wrote with a View of being spoke in the Theatre at the late Commemoration.



O N

Lady *Pomfret's* Benefaction

TO THE

UNIVERSITY of OXFORD.

AS in the bosom of some secret shade,
 Where no rude sounds the solemn scene invade,
 An ancient hermit, far from mortal eyes,
 Gives his rapt soul in converse to the skies;
 Yet should some chosen band of wise and great
 Lend transient lustre to his dark retreat,
 Drawn by his fame, or vot'ries of his pray'r;
 His heart relenting feels the social care:
 Pleas'd he points out each hallow'd spot, which throws
 A gleam of rapture round his dead repose;
 Each reverend oak, or consecrated stream,
 Where angels prompt his high mysterious dream:

Studious for them he culls his treasur'd stores,
 Reliques of holy Saints his foul adores ;
 And proud and anxious in the fond display, 15
 Refigns to pious vanity the day.

Through OXFORD's deep recess such transport spreads,
 Darts on her tow'rs, and gleams along her meads,
 When high-born virtue, wit, and beauty deign
 To gild her shades, and POMFRET leads the train. 20
 For her the Dryads quit their moss-clad bow'rs,
 Where Contemplation leads th' unruffled hours :
 For her the nymphs, that haunt her streams, display
 Their bay-crown'd tresses to the glare of day :
 For her they strike the shell, to her they bow, 25
 Who twines fresh wreaths round Isis' honour'd brow ;
 Who bids assemble in her green abodes
 The deathless forms of Heroes and of Gods.

See! to the sacred troop she opens wide
 Her arms, who down old Time's uncertain tide 30
 Long by the breath of shifting tempests tost,
 Seek their last refuge on her friendly coast.
 Pleas'd in these sheltring bowers they make retreat ;
 But trembling still and doubtful of their fate ;

Th' uplifted stroke e'en yet they seem to feel, 35
 When pious frenzy, and barbarian steel
 To whelm in darkness and in death combin'd
 The beauteous forms of man's creative mind.

Lo! wrapt in horrid zeal, Gregorius' hand
 To Wisdom's fane applies the burning brand; 40
 Aims at each classic wreath his bigot rage,
 The breathing sculpture, and th' illumin'd page!
 Then each fond muse at once, with grief oppress'd,
 Clasp'd her lov'd offspring to her parent breast.
 See him, who stood the fierce Triumvir's doom 45
 Unmov'd, now trembling for his life to come!
 Fair Science heart-struck saw the dark intent,
 And less abhor'd the Conqueror, than the Saint.

O! sacred name, to wit, to virtue dear!
 Here fix thy throne, thy laurell'd bust be here! 50
 Here thy own *Pallas*, o'er her *Tully's* head,
 Just to thy fame, her heav'n-wrought shield shall spread.

And lo! where, hov'ring 'mid the fields of light,
 His genius smiles enraptur'd at the sight;
 And pleas'd pursues his lov'd remains, convey'd 55
 To mingle with the Muses in their shade.

For warm e'en still, and wakeful to the fame
 Which wing'd his virtue, and inspir'd his theme,
 Anxious he stood: and bending from the skies
 O'er this wide varied scene he cast his eyes: 60
 Earnest he fix'd them on his native shore;
 There Science feeds her golden lamp no more.
 Grief shook his bosom as he look'd, and found
 Rome's antient Genius prostrate on the ground:
 'Round him each Art and weeping Virtue lay, 65
 And mourn'd his Throne usurp'd and desolated sway.

E'en his own Tusculum he fought in vain:
 There double darkness held her chief domain.
 There, where, by gen'rous indignation led,
 He forg'd each bolt, that struck oppression dead; 70
 Where, wont with Virtue's genuine sons to rove,
 He woo'd fair Knowledge 'mid his Attic Grove;
 And, mildly studious of the moral plan,
 In Truth's bright mirror held up man to man;
 A tasteless croud, unlov'd, unhonour'd, dwell, 75
 And cloister'd Monk'ry slumbers in it's cell.

See! Superstition sheds her thickest gloom,
 Her spectres 'round the hallow'd grottoes roam,

Deform the bow'r, and rash into the glade,
Where meek-ey'd Wisdom with the Graces play'd. 80

She too, this Child of Slav'ry and of Night,
To his lov'd Athens wing'd her fable flight;
And o'er the laurell'd turrets had display'd,
Blasting heav'n's purer beam, her baleful shade;
Wither'd each flow'r of oliv'd Academe, 85
And poison'd sweet Ilyffus' Muse-lov'd stream.

O'erwhelm'd he gaz'd; he heav'd th' indignant sigh,
And fear'd bright Truth had gain'd her native sky;
But fear'd in vain---descending from th' abodes
Where thron'd she sat an inmate with the Gods, 90
The new-born earth receiv'd th' immortal maid;
Here still she hovers with chaste wing display'd,
On some blest spot her mild and genial stand
She takes, and waves her sceptre o'er the land.
Exil'd by tyrant pow'r, oppress'd in vain, 95
She blooms anew, and vindicates her reign.
Nor War's blind fury, nor unpitying age,
Nor Envy's breath, nor grim religious rage
With thunder arm'd, her worst and deadliest foe,
Shall blast th' eternal laurel on her brow. 100

Driv'n from the foil, which tun'd her early lay,
 He hails in distant climes her lighted ray,
 In Britain chief—for Freedom led the way;
 Not, as in Rome or Sparta she was seen,
 With fierce step moving, and relentless mien, 105
 While ev'ry virgin muse, abash'd and shy,
 Shun'd the dread lustre of her jealous eye;
 But mild in temper'd beauty: o'er her face
 Time's lenient hand had pour'd a softer grace;
 Sweet mercy check'd her eye's feverer glow, 110
 And breath'd a gentler glory on her brow.
 A golden fillet o'er her flowing hair,
 Improv'd to softness ev'ry wilder air:
 A stole nor gorgeous, nor austere plain,
 Serv'd but to deck each motion, not restrain. 115
 Wak'd by her potent breath, and wond'ring, stand
 The sprightly Arts around, a laurel'd band.
 She forms th' unpolish'd mass, inspires the whole,
 And pours the heav'n-born energy of soul;
 Each feels the vigour of her quick'ning rays, 120
 Each feels, and kindles in the general blaze.

Touch'd by the vivid influence of her beam,
 Isis, that roll'd e'er while a fullen stream,
 To ev'ry muse and ev'ry grace unknown,
 Shag'd with rough thorn, with idle weeds o'ergrown, 125
 Sees sudden splendor on her bosom shine,
 And to pure gold her ruder ore refine.

The Flow'rs that live in Freedom's eye alone,
 Unmask their leaves, and give them to the sun.

Each bird of melody exalts her note, 130

And wood nymphs dance in each sequester'd grot ;

Pleas'd to survey their verdant banks around

With wreathed spires and golden turrets crown'd.

Sacred to Science here the good and wife

Plant the green wreath, and bid the temple rise. 135

The fair, ambitious of the bright design,

Round Learning's fane the mingled chaplet twine.

Their interest right they deem, with her's combin'd-----

Her balmy dew drops sweetness on the mind ;

And the mild breath of pure ingenuous art 140

Attunes to beauty ev'ry feeling heart.

E'en now I feel the transport bland, that stole,

And wrapt in sweet enthusiasm all my soul,

When late my ravish'd eye round Isis' side
 View'd yon time-honour'd band in sculptur'd pride, 145
 Each glowing bust, with bold expression wrought,
 Where happiest art refines, what strength begot.
 I gaz'd; and long'd to clasp to my embrace
 The dear, the breathing form of Attic Grace.
 Charm'd fancy dwells upon the scene, and hears 150
 E'en now the voice which broke upon my ears.

" These gifts, it cried, are Freedom's: at her shrine
 " With rev'rence bow, and own the hand divine.
 " Her's is all beauty's empire: she alone
 " Throws 'round each labour'd form the grace-wove zone. 155
 " The pencil's blush, the lyre to rapture strung,
 " The soft enchantment of the poet's song,
 " Each ray of fancy, that with magic glow
 " Illumes this dark and dreary vale of woe,
 " Fades at pale Slav'ry's touch; th' illusions fly, 160
 " And Mis'ry's form glares naked on the eye.
 " Ask, whence the beams that spread round BEAUFORT's crest,
 " And light th' eternal sun-shine in his breast?

(II)

- " Why to its parent deep glides down, O FANE,
" Thy life's last stream, unfullied and serene? 165
" Not that their blood, unstain'd and spotless, springs
" In bright descent from heroes or from kings:
" Not that just heav'n has pour'd its richest stores,
" And old magnificence emblaz'd their doors:
" But that within their breast, her noblest seat, 170
" Sits shrin'd, and glows with all her gen'rous heat
" The soul of British Freedom: she inspires
" The heart's full bliss, and fans the latent fires.
" She waits, their genius mild, to still the rage
" Of fell disease, to smoothe the brow of age; 175
" Shake o'er their last dread hour her fragrant plume,
" And drop the tear of honour on their tomb.
" Her's is this band; each name of dear renown,
" Whom Isis clasps, and joys to call her own.
" And her's that voice, superior to the last 180
" O'er Time's enfeebling hand, and Envy's blast,
" Which stems awhile Corruption's headlong tide,
" And galls the sons of Int'rest and of Pride.
" All, all is her's-----and ye, ingenuous youth,
" Who sip in these blest vales the balm of truth, 185

" Here pour your incense; catch each spark, that plays
 " Round Freedom's throne, and feed the living blaze.
 " Nor e'er let Slav'ry spread o'er these retreats
 " Her harpy's wing, and rifle all their sweets:
 " Nor let her pow'r subdue, nor fraud surprize— 190
 " Arrest, and seize her in each dark disguise.
 " Then pleas'd to sport amidst th' Aonian Maids
 " Shall white-rob'd Truth dwell ever in your shades:
 " And leading each gay daughter of the sky,
 " Each nymph of grace, and pow'r of harmony, 195
 " O'er the brown haunt, and flow'r-embroider'd stream,
 " Pour the full splendor of her richest beam."

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F I N I S.